

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The present Amendment is responsive to the non-final Office Action mailed January 18, 2007, in the above-identified application.

Claim 2 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, claims 1 and 3-6 are the claims currently presented for examination in the application.

Claims 1 and 6 are amended to clarify features recited thereby.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for foreign priority and the receipt of the priority documents.

Further, applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging review and consideration of the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on January 21, 2004.

Rejection of Claims 1 and 3-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 3-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Sehgal, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0050406. Reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

According to an aspect of applicant's invention as claimed in claim 1, water mark formation caused by processing solution adhering to the substrate is prevented or suppressed by releasing the ambient atmosphere of the processing chamber when the processing solution in the processing chamber reaches a boiling point or higher temperature. According to this aspect of the invention as claimed in claim 1, the processing apparatus includes controls for a first valve, such as solenoid valve 46, that when opened allows vapor to be supplied to the processing chamber, and a second valve, such as open/close valve 6, that allows for the releasing of the ambient atmosphere. By way of example, claim 1 requires a release element for releasing the ambient atmosphere in the processing chamber in an external atmosphere when a second valve is in an open state, and a controller for controlling the second valve to thereby release the ambient atmosphere when the processing solution in the processing chamber reaches a temperature which is the boiling point of the processing solution or higher.

Sehgal discloses a method of removing photoresist or resist residue at pressures ranging from ambient to supercritical from a substrate (Sehgal, Abstract).

Sehgal does not disclose or suggest a controller for controlling a second valve to thereby release an ambient atmosphere in the processing chamber when a processing solution in the processing chamber reaches a temperature which is the boiling point or higher of the processing solution in an external atmosphere. That is, a substrate processing apparatus that includes such a controller for controlling the second valve is not disclosed or suggested by Sehgal. Accordingly, Sehgal does not disclose or suggest the recitations of claim 1.

Claims 3-6 depend from claim 1 and are therefore patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the same reasons.

Rejection of Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious from Sehgal in view of De Young et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,782,900. Reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

De Young does not cure the above-noted deficiencies of Sehgal as they relate to the above-noted features of claim 1. Accordingly, even taken together in combination, Sehgal and De Young do not disclose or suggest the recitations of claim 1. Therefore, since claim 3 depends from claim 1, claim 3 is patentably distinguishable over the cited for at least the same reasons.

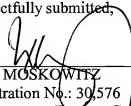
In view of the foregoing discussion, reconsideration of the rejections is respectfully requested and allowance of the claims of the application is believed to be warranted. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application, allow the claims as amended and pass this case to issue.

Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the present Response or regarding the application generally, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney at the below-provided telephone number.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS BEING
SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY
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Respectfully submitted,


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